

Our Times In Prophecy No. 5.

BY JOHN CULP.

The "great red dragon" that appeared in heaven, must have been the Roman powers in the land of Judea which they had subjugated to Roman province. His seven heads must have reference to the seven forms of government under which Rome was governed, and the seven crowns likely referred to the seven hills upon which Rome was built.

The "stars of heaven" that were cast to the ground, were rulers in the Jewish church. There were three classes of rulers among them; the kings, the priests and the sanhedrim. A third of these, the kings, were taken away by the Roman power—verse 4. As it is stated in this verse, the great enemy had good opportunities to devour this child, being among the church, and to a great extent, had it under his control. Furthermore, it always has been the business of the enemy to keep informed in the movements and expectations of the church, hence it is no more than what might be expected that he would put forth his best efforts to frustrate the predictions and expectations of the church. So it came to pass, when he aimed to deal the death blow which was to settle the intentions of God forever, that he slayed all the children of Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, so as to be sure to kill the child of the Jewish church.

The Savior which was the child did ascend into heaven, and the woman which was the church "fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days." This is the same time that Daniel referred to, and has been pointed out as the 1260 years between the rise of the Papacy and the Reformation.

In connection with this, the Revelator gives us, from verse 7 to the end of verse 14, incidents until the time when the Papacy or little horn came up and the departure of the church into the wilderness.

But before we proceed we must have the figurative sense of the words *earth* and *sea* as used in their connection in this chapter. The meaning which we assume to attach to the word *earth* as used here, is morality. The following passages are brought forth to sustain such a definition. Deut. 4:26 and 32:1, Ps. 50:4, Isa. 1:2 and Rev. 11:18. It is at least evident from the expressions in these passages that God has in his arrangements different spheres to be occupied by the human family. Such, we notice to be the fact from the scripture under consideration: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea" verse 12.

The figurative signification of the word *sea* we also must learn in order to give a proper exposition of this scripture. The meaning that seems to adapt itself scripturally, is that it has reference to the political powers.

It is admitted that the political powers are, to a great extent, governed by morality, but there is as much difference in a government purely controlled by morality and that by the sword, as there is between the earth and the sea.

Morality will govern by arbitration and that which is naturally right between man and man. A political government left to itself and in its rude state governs by might. That such a meaning is scripturally applicable, see Ps. 18:16 and 65:7 and 124:2, 5, Jer. 46:7, 8 and 47:2, Isa. 8:7, 8 and Rev. 17:15.

Upon these grounds the verses from 7 to 14 are expounded.

The "war in heaven" had its beginning when Christianity had not yet been distinctly understood, and fully separated from Judaism and Paganism.

It is evident that Christianity was not fully understood from the circumstance of having a council at Jerusalem where the Holy Ghost miraculously instructed the apostles and the elders that it was not necessary to keep the law of Moses. This was a very aggravating decision to the enemy, for previous to this time he had laid his plans to mix Judaism into Christianity, and thereby, have Paganism to control it all. Hence the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon. And it is stated that the dragon prevailed not, neither was his place nor his angels, places found in heaven any more.

Although he did not prevail—whether he knew it or not—he made the people believe he was prevailing.

When we read the records of the apostles we may notice how the enemy attempted to thoroughly mix Paganism and Judaism and Christianity. The apostle even exclaimed that the "mystery of iniquity doth already work" and it seemed impossible to get rid of it. False brethren were among them. The apostles even knewed that grievous wolves would enter into the flock, and such as were spots in their feasts feasting themselves without fear were among them. The burden of church history is the mixing of Judaism, Paganism and Christianity.

They did not dare make Conventions or Annual Meeting to cut them off by decisions; nor can there any trace of such meetings be found before about A. D. 250, when the ten horns sprang up and the little horn made its appearance among them. So far as the disciples were concerned it was a fair fight in an open field. The truth was planted and propagated without general meetings. The disciples preached the Gospel and the love of a crucified Redeemer. The enemy preached Christianity and Judaism combined, to which Paganism was added.

Persecution raged against the true disciples, and they obeyed the command of the Master; "when they persecute you in this city flee ye into another." They did not expel and drive others away but they were expelled and persecuted and fled into the wilderness. A pure church fled and numerous scattered throughout the world, living under a congregational form of government, having the New Testament for their creed book. In testimony of which a few quotations are added from *History of Foreign Baptists, Vol. I.*

"During the rise and growth of these corruptions, the churches for three centuries remained as originally formed, independent of each other, and were united by no tie but that of charity." Page 31.

"During the greater part of this (second) century Christian churches were independent of each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds but charity." Page 110.

This class (a class whose record is given by their enemies) of orientals was unconnected with all hierarchies, and consisted of innumerable churches in different countries." Page 116.

The church fleeing from before the enemy enraged the dragon and he had to take up his abode among the inhabitants of "the earth (moral people) and of the sea" (political powers). This earth continually "swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth," that he might cause the woman (church) to be carried away by it.

The whole attention of the enemy now had to be turned to the "earth" the "sea" and the remnant of the seed of the church, which were Christian people, influences and doctrines which still remained among the Roman church, and no doubt caused very many martyrdoms. For this many of our church Fathers are to blame, for they would not permit fleeing according to the commandments, but urged it cowardly to run, that they would forfeit their church fellowship in this instance, and even required them to be rebaptized. This all was the work of the enemy spreading misery and woe among the innocent classes. But it seemed necessary for the enemy to pursue this course to establish the point that this was the true church sure enough, which many of us believe unto this day. Then in the meantime provincial councils were brought about for strict unity on minor points which soon run into general councils which made the opening for exalted positions in which a few bigoted men run the church and believed that since they were set to rule over the things of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, they ought to be the proper judges in the political and secular affairs of this world, which caused the fit expression of the Revelator: "And I stood upon the sand (the motives and discussion that urged the unity of the church with the Roman powers) of the sea and saw a beast rise up out of the sea." Rev. 13:1.

International Sunday School Lessons.

BY REV. F. B. HARGREAVES.

Lesson 8.

August 22nd.

WARNING TO JUDAS AND PETER.

John 13, 21, 38. Golden Text, 1 Cor., 10-12.

Time and place, same as last lesson.

This lesson contains one of the most impressive and thrilling scenes in the history of the disciples.

They were gathered round the table partaking of the Passover supper, when Jesus told them that one of their number would betray Him.

To some this must have been a great surprise, and it is no wonder that the fervent and earnest Peter should desire to know who the traitor was.

He beckons across the table to John, the beloved disciple, "that he should ask who it should be."

John asked the Master and was told that it was the one to whom He would give the sop, when He had dipped it. "And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot."

Then Jesus told him to do his work quickly. Judas went out into the darkness of the night to prepare for that terrible betrayal which stands without a parallel in history.

Judas was warned by Christ, and yet he fell. After some further remarks our Lord gave His new commandment, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

It was at this point that the impetuous Peter, referring to a previous remark of Christ's, "Whither I go ye can not come," asked Him whither He went.

When assured that he could not then follow his Master, he broke out with the vehement assertion, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake."

Observe the answer of Jesus, who read his heart. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice."

Here was a solemn and impressive warning for Peter, and it seems to have affected him so much that he did not enter into any further conversation during the meal.

Peter fell, but by the grace of God he was able to rise again.

We have here the contrast between the two characters.

In each case the fall was gradual. In the case of Judas it was complete; in that of Peter it was only partial.

The name of Judas has passed down through the ages a synonym for traitor and all that is despicable in such a character.

But the name of Peter is honored and has renewed Christian life, so noble and grand, is beloved by the church of God in every land.

All that our Lord did for Judas was of no avail; he went on to his dreadful and tragic death.

But one look from the Master melted the heart of Peter, and he came back a better and truer man.

LESSON THOUGHTS.

1. God is constantly warning us.
2. It is well for us if we heed the voice of God before it is too late.
3. Do not be over confident of your own powers.
4. Learn to trust only and fully in Jesus.

Strive everywhere and in all things to be at peace. If trouble comes from within or without, treat it peacefully. If joy comes, receive it peacefully, without excitement. If we must needs flee from evil let us do it calmly, without agitation, or we may stumble and fall in our haste. Let us do good peacefully, or our hurry will lead us into endless faults. Even repentance is work which should be carried on peacefully.—*St. Frances de Sales.*

"Two things a master commits to his servant's care," said one; "the child and the child's clothes." It will be a poor excuse for the servant to say, at his master's return, "Sir, here are all the child's clothes, neat and clean, but the child is lost!" Much so with the account that many will give to God of their souls and bodies at the great day. "Lord, here is my body; I was very grateful for it; I neglected nothing that belonged to its content and welfare; but as for my soul, that is lost and cast away for ever. I took little care and thought about it!"—FLAVEL.